

Message Text

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ACTION PM-03

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6193

INFO DIA WASHDC

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 8788

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR PFOR CH US

SUBJ: NCNA ON DIEGO GARCIA

SUMMARY: NCNA'S REPORT ON US CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL OF EXPANDING FACILITIES AT DIEGO GARCIA IS THE MOST APPROVING PUBLIC PRC REACTION TO THE US BASE THERE. THE EXPANSION IS DEPICTED AS NECESSITATED BY THE SOVIET CHALLENGE IN THE REGION. THE ZONE OF PEACE CONCEPT, NORMALLY INCLUDED IN PAST PRC MEDIA COMMENTS ON DIEGO GARCIA, IS NOT MENTIONED AND IS REPLACED BY NCNA'S CLAIM THAT THE SOVIETS ARE A THREAT TO THE COASTAL STATES. END SUMMARY

1. NCNA JULY 30 REPORTED US CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL OF EXPANSION OF DIEGO GARCIA, INCLUDING EXTENSION OF THE RUNWAY TO ENABLE B-52S TO OPERATE. WHILE CLAIMING THAT THIS IS FURTHER INDICATION OF INTENSIFICATION OF US-USSR "RIVALRY" IN THE IN-

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DIAN OCEAN,NCNA DOES NOT IN ANY WAY CONDEMN THE US ACTION.

RATHER, THE SOVIETS ARE ATTACKED FOR EXPANDING THEIR NAVAL STRENGTH IN THE AREA, WHICH IS CITED AS THE SOURCE OF SUPERPOWER CONTENTION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. THE ZONE OF PEACE, NORMALLY INCLUDED IN PAST PRC PUBLIC COMMENTS ON DIEGO GARCIA, IS NOT MENTIONED AT ALL AND SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN REPLACED, AT LEAST IN THIS ARTICLE, BY THE PRC CONSIDERATION OF THE "GRAVE" SOVIET THREAT TO THE COASTAL NATIONS OF THE AREA.

2. NCNA ALSO AGAIN LINKS INCREASED TENSION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN TO THE REOPENING OF THE SUEZ CANAL. ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLE, THE IMPORTANCE OF DIEGO GARCIA AS A BASE HAS "BECOME MORE APPARENT". CAUSING THE US PRESIDENT TO SEEK CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL FOR THE NEW MILITARY FACILITIES TO "MEET THE CHALLENGE OF THE SOVIET UNION".

3. PEKING'S CONCERN OVER THE SOVIET BUILD-UP IN THE INDIAN OCEAN WAS MOST RECENTLY EXPRESSED PRIVATELY BY FONMIN CHIAO KUAN-HUA TO HIS AUSTRALIAN COUNTERPART IN EARLY JUNE WITH CHIAO ENCOURAGING THE AUSTRALIANS TO MUTE THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE US EXPANSION AT DIEGO GARCIA (PEKING 1107). THIS CURRENT NCNA PIECE IS PROBABLY AS CLOSE TO APPROVAL OF THE US ACTION AS PEKING CAN POSSIBLY COME PUBLICLY. INDEED, THE ARTICLE MAKES THE US CASE FOR THE NEED TO EXPAND THE FACILITY, CLAIMING THAT THE SOVIET FLEET HAS EXPANDED TO ABOUT 19 SHIPS AND, OBVIOUSLY REFERRING TO SOMALIA, THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE "SEIZED QUITE A NUMBER OF MILITARY BASES IN DISGUISED FORM".
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